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72 : Venice

Luke Sunderland (Durham University)

Quis civitatem et amplissimam quidem et exornatissimam
vicinarumque prestantem expertus infitiabitur? Sed avaro quisquis
ingenio, lucri estu agitur, huc ruit et libens mansitat. At sapiente studio
contractis nec mores nec dextur est locus. Tam mehercule ubi fervet
cura numalis scientie defervet, quam in litterarum sacrario divitiarum
honus postponitur. Vos haud aliter quam piperis crocive negotium
sortimini litterarum. Emissio pretio omnis ea congressio familiaris
evanescit.¹

What person who knows the city will deny that it is the richest, and
most elegant, and outstanding of all its neighbours? Everyone but
everyone who is driven by greed and fervour for wealth rushes here,
and happily remains. For those united by the desire for wisdom,
however, neither the customs nor the place suit. By heaven, where love
for money flourishes, interest in knowledge perishes, and the treasures
in the shrine of literature are less prized. You Venetians deal with
learning as a business, like the pepper or saffron trade. As soon as the
money is paid, all that friendly association disappears.

So speaks the Paduan in *Dragmalogia de Eligibili Vite Genere*, a debate text
completed c. 1404-8 that pits a Venetian against a citizen of Padua. Its author,
Giovanni da Conversino da Ravenna—a peripatetic intellectual who taught at Ferrara,
Treviso, and Florence—served in Venice, where he set up a grammar school in 1388.²

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¹ *Dragmalogia*, pp. 224-6. Translations throughout are my own, though I am indebted
to those provided by Eaker in her edition of the *Dragmalogia*.

² See Gargan, 'Il preumanesimo', on Giovanni's output.

He later became lecturer in grammar and rhetoric at Padua, before returning to Venice.³ In the *Dragmalogia*, the Venetian defends his city. Referring to the man from Ravenna—that is, Giovanni himself—he declares:

auspicato se Venetias contulit, gentium nusquam melius collocandus: urbem, Latialium amplissimam matrem asillumve lassorum, felicem inquam opibus, frequente numero gentium, rebus quas usus exposcat completam omnibus. (p. 224)

he arrived at Venice at an auspicious moment; nowhere would he have been better located: the city is the wealthy mother of the Italians and an asylum for the weary, happy in its riches, well populated, and replete with all the things that comfort demands.

Throughout the text, Padua and Venice stand in an antithetical relationship. The Paduan has the upper hand, with lengthier interventions. He considers Venice exceptional—‘nam quemadmodum situ, totius vite ratione a ceteris variat’ (p. 124) [it is different from other cities in location and manner of its whole life]—but criticizes the city for its dirty water and air, though he acknowledges that the Venetian desire for a peaceful life is noble. The debate ranges through all aspects of life, from vices and virtues to the arts and courtly behaviour, but centres on politics. The Paduan prefers rule by a single monarch to Venice’s council: ‘oligarchus principatus est diligenti pene tirannidi compar’ [its oligarchic government is similar to a diligent tyranny] (p. 124), one reason for this being monarchy’s sponsorship of the arts: Virgil, Horace, and Ovid prospered under Augustus, argues the Paduan, and aristocratic lords provided for Boccaccio and Petrarch (p. 114). Singular talents are elevated by singular rulers. In response, the Venetian cites the presence in the city of writers collecting deeds in annals, but the Paduan dismisses that genre as ‘caduca profecto conviviorumque simillima predicatio; nam maternis aut nudis vocibus alligantur’ [an

³ See Kohl’s introduction to the *Dragmalogia*, ed. Eaker.

ephemeral type of publication, similar to table chatter; such writings are restricted to the vernacular and to plain language] (p. 118).

How accurate is this portrait of Venice as a literary desert? Venice was indeed occupied with concerns other than literature; few literary texts were written there in this period. The city's geography orientated it toward control of the Adriatic, especially the Dalmatian coast, and access routes via Constantinople to the Black Sea ports. The plague came to the city in 1348 when rats were transported into Europe by Venetians and Genovesi pursuing trade with Tartars in the Crimea. Commerce animated wars with Genoa for naval supremacy in 1350-55 and 1378-81; and toward the end of the period discussed here, a new naval enemy came into view: the Turks. Venetian commercial expansion and offers of protection led to the acquisition of Corfu, Scutari, and Durazzo in southern Dalmatia, alongside Nauplia and Argos in Morea, and most of the islands of the Cyclades and the Dodecanese. By 1390, a Venetian agent was stationed in Siam.⁴ From the late fourteenth century onwards, however, Venice developed control of mainland northeast Italy: Treviso was recovered in 1392, Venetian territory extended into the Friuli, and Padua fell to Venice in 1404. Verona, Belluno, and Vicenza were also annexed.

Yet the political and economic interests of Venice were inseparable from her cultural and literary ones; Venice looked East and West intellectually, too. The idea that Venice had two heritages was most clearly articulated in the chronicles written by the great intellectual Andrea Dandolo, doge of Venice from 1343 to 1354. Late Trecento Venice flourished as a centre of Latin–Greek cultural exchange: interest in

⁴ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, p. 260.

Aristotle increased and Greek knowledge and texts flowed in.⁵ Byzantine statesmen could be found in the city; alongside them, humanist scholars, most notably, Petrarch. Texts appeared in Latin, Occitan, Tuscan, and French, as well as in hybrid forms, mixing these languages with Veneto dialects. Venice had never been intellectually disconnected from the mainland, and so the sharp contrast between Venice and Padua set up by Giovanni is not completely exact: Dandolo studied law at Padua, whose university was subsidized by Venice, even before the city came under Venetian control. The Venetian economic engine powered the Paduan academy.

The main literary product of Venice was indeed chronicles, but the genre deserves more credit than the Paduan of the *Dragmalogia* allows. His association of chronicles with the vernacular owes something to the influence of Martin da Canal's *Estoires de Venise* (c. 1275), written in French.⁶ In our period, Daniele da Chinazzo composed his 'popular' account of the 1378-81 war with Genoa—the *Cronica de la guerra da Veniciani a Zenovesi*—in the hybrid tongue of Franco-Italian. But many other chronicles were in Latin, most notably Dandolo's texts and the chronicle by the chancellor Raffaino Caresini, who continues the former's work. More than just recordings of events, these vast surveys of Venice's place in history argued for her role in the world. And though, chronicles aside, little literature was produced in Venice, then much was conserved and copied in the city, before being disseminated further, out to the East. This chapter will focus, then, on literary influences coming into Venice, and on her role in spreading texts. My first subject, Petrarch, is cited by *Dragmalogia*'s Paduan as a protégé of that city, but he also stayed for six years in

⁵ See Pertusi, 'L'umanesimo greco', on Greek studies at Venice.

⁶ Ed. Limentani.

Venice, a consequence of his links with the chancery and his correspondence with Dandolo.⁷ Petrarchan texts associated with Venice include the *Trionfi*, which stages a parade of poets—Greek, Latin, Tuscan, and Occitan—who influenced him. Petrarch’s own influence shaped the poetry of Venetians, most notably the *Leandreide* by Giovanni Girolamo Nadal, with its own line-up of star poets; unlike Petrarch’s, however, this group includes Venetians, affording glimpses of a largely lost Venetian poetic tradition. Venetian manuscripts preserving compilations of poetry often insert the works of native poets alongside those of the masters, notably Dante and Petrarch. Venice thus appears as the legitimate successor to poetic traditions going back to the Greeks. Petrarch also influenced the tradition of chronicles—analyzed in the second section here—with their broad visions of history casting Venice as heir to the great civilizations of all time. Finally, I survey evidence for the city’s importance as a conduit for literature, demonstrating that Venice’s marriage to the sea did not entail a divorce from literary history.

Petrarch and Lyric Culture

Petrarch’s Venetian period, 1362-68, was vastly productive; most notably, he progressed with the *Trionfi* and the *Canzoniere*. At Venice, his lodgings became a privileged meeting place for literary types; Boccaccio stayed there in 1363.⁸ Like Giovanni da Conversino, Petrarch wove autobiography into his writings, and recorded

⁷ See Mann, ‘Petrarca’, on Petrarch’s links with Venice.

⁸ Gargan, ‘Il preumanesimo’, p. 155.

his own opinions about Venice in one of his 'letters of old age', written in 1367, and addressed to Guido Sette, archbishop of Genoa (*Senilium Rerum Libri X*, 2). This letter, Petrarch's longest autobiographical missive, narrates his experiences of living in various cities; in each case, he laments urban decline from previous heights. No exceptions to this downward trend appear, not even Venice:

ostendat michi in occidente aut in artho vel in una urbe contrarium, et vicerit. certe enim hec ipsa, unde tibi nunc scribo et cuius ad ultimum incola factus sum, non tam oblectationem quam securitatem et quietem querens, Venetorum urbs, quamvis et consilio civium et locorum situ inter omnes alias nostril orbis prospero ac tranquillo sit in statu, fuit tamen aliquando prosperiore: tunc sicilet cum visendi gratia cum preceptore meo huc primum e Bononia adolescens veni.⁹

let [he who disagrees with me] find one example of a city in the West and or the North where the opposite is happening, and he shall win the argument. Indeed, this [city] from which I am writing to you, and of which I have recently become an inhabitant—not because I was seeking the pleasurable life, but rather peace and quiet—the city of Venice, which owing to the wisdom of its citizens and to its geographical position is in a situation of greater tranquillity and prosperity than any other city, once had a more prosperous life: that is, at the time I visited from Bologna as an adolescent, in the company of my preceptor.

What explains this discontent with Venice? Petrarch considers the influx of slaves for sale¹⁰ a symptom of the demise of civilizations:

Grecie calamitas vetus est, sed Scitharum recens. Ut, unde nuper ingens annua vis frumenti navibus in hanc urbem invehī solebat, inde nunc servis honeste naves veniant, quos urgente miseri venditant parentes.

the fall of Greece is ancient, that of Scythia recent, as is manifest in the arrival of ships from that country filled, not with grain as was once the case, but with slaves sold by their own parents because of poverty.

These slaves, he says, sully Venice:

⁹ Quoted from the *Epistole*, ed. Dotti.

¹⁰ See further Wallace, *Premodern Places*, pp. 190-92.

insolita et inextimabilis turba servorum utriusque sexus hanc
pulcherrimam urbem scithicis et informi colluvie, velut amnem
nitidissimum torrens turbidus inficit.

the extraordinary and incredible crowd of slaves of both sexes dirties
this most beautiful city with their ugly, Scythian faces, just like a
torrent of filth polluting the clearest stream.

Petrarch also fitted ill within Venetian intellectual life: he learned that four of his supposed friends there considered him ignorant because he did not heed logical distinctions used by Aristotelians. In fact, Petrarch had denounced this godless learning, preferring qualities developed through literary studies, especially eloquence.¹¹ While Petrarch eventually opted for the intellectual climate offered by Padua, the story of his Venetian experience does not suggest a lack of academic activity in the lagoon city. Indeed, the testament of one of his 'friends', Tomà Talenti, left funds for a small college at Bologna for sixteen students, twelve of whom were to be Venetian (Venice functioned, we see, as a mini-nation). Talenti also bequeathed his science books to Venice and provided funds for the study of logic and philosophy there.¹² Because of Venice's constitution, Petrarch too thought of donating his books for the creation of a public library; many other cities' libraries were the preserve of kings, princes or lords. But he finally took his books with him to Padua, and his library was scattered after his death in 1374.¹³ Yet Venice, though not the right place for Petrarch, was no intellectual void.

One of the *Trionfi* provides information about Petrarch's inspirations and the poetic expertise he brought with him. Powerless under the spell of love, the poet of

¹¹ Lane, *Venice*, p. 217.

¹² See Nardi, 'Letteratura'.

¹³ See Stocchi, 'La biblioteca'.

Triumphus Cupidinis IV meets the other great writers of ancient and recent times who have toiled in love's service: Virgil, Ovid, and Catullus appear, then those who 'pur d'amor volgarmente ragionando' (30) [speak of love, but in the vulgar tongue].¹⁴ Dante and his Beatrice figure, as do Cino da Pistoia and 'i duo Guidi' (34) [the two Guidos, that is Guido Guinizzelli and Guido Cavalcanti]. Reference is made to the Sicilian school of poets, 'che fur già primi, e quivi eran da sezzo' (36) [who were once first, but now come last]. Dante considered the Sicilians the first to have written in the *lingua di sì*, but these pioneers were subsequently surpassed by greater poets (*Vita Nuova* xxv.5).¹⁵ The longest section discusses the Occitan troubadours:¹⁶

e poi v'era un drappello
di portamenti e di volgari strani:
 fra tutti il primo Arnaldo Daniello,
gran maestro d'amor, ch'a la sua terra
ancor fa onor col suo dir strano e bello;
 eranvi quei ch'Amor sì leve afferra,
l'un Piero e l'altro e 'l men famoso Arnaldo,
e quei che fur conquisi con più guerra:
 i' dico l'uno e l'altro Raymbaldo
che cantò pur Beatrice e Monferrato,
e 'l vecchio Pier d'Alvernia con Giraldo;
 Folco, que' ch'a Marsilia il nome à dato
ed a Genova tolto, ed a l'extremo
cangiò per miglior patria habito e stato;
 Giaufrè Rudel, ch'usò la vela e 'l remo
a cercar la sua morte, e quel Guilliello
che par cantar à 'l fior de' suoi dì scemo;
 Amerigo, Bernardo, Ugo e Gauselmo,

¹⁴ Ed. Pacca and Paolino.

¹⁵ Ed. De Robertis. See Mallette, *Kingdom*, on the Sicilian poets, and ch 46 above.

¹⁶ Petrarch has been identified, somewhat arbitrarily, as the owner of *K* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 12473). There is also evidence that he saw *T* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 15211). See Folena, 'Tradizione', pp. 13-15.

e molti altri ne vidi, a cui la lingua
lancia e spada fu sempre, e targia ed elmo.

(38-57)

Then there was a group foreign in their dress and speech: first of all Arnaut Daniel, the great master of love, who still brings honour to his land with his strange and beautiful language; here too were the willing prisoners of Love, the one and the other Peire, and the less famous Arnaut, and those who were defeated after a longer fight: that is, the one and the other Raimbaut, he who sang for Beatrice and Montferrat, and the old Peire d'Alvernha [Peter of Auvergne] with Giraut; Fouque, whose name gave renown to Marseille and took it from Genoa, and who at the end of his life changed habit and status to seek a better land; Jaufre Rudel, who used sails and oars to voyage to his death, and that Guilhem who was cut down in the flower of life because of his love songs; and Aimeric, Bernart, Uc, and Gaucelm, and many others I saw, to whom language was a lance and sword, shield and helmet.

Petrarch is clearly on first-name terms with the giants of troubadour poetry. These descriptions owe much to the *vidas* and *razos*, explanatory biographical glosses to the songs composed in Occitan in Italy to accompany the poems in the manuscripts produced there. Petrarch may have brought knowledge of troubadour poetry, and perhaps even the poems themselves, to Venice, where he inspired native poetic production, both political—such as that of Francesco di Vannozzo,¹⁷ a mercenary poet who wrote songs attacking Venice on behalf of Paduan nobles, before transferring to the Venetian camp to write in celebration of their victory—and more amorous, such as the compositions of Leonardo Giustiniani.¹⁸

Another Venetian writer taking his cue from Petrarch was Giovanni Girolamo Nadal, author of the *Leandreide* (completed 1381-82), an allegorical, didactical reworking of the Greek myth of Hero and Leander written in a mixture of Tuscan and

¹⁷ Ed. Medin.

¹⁸ Ed. Wiese.

Venetian, and displaying influence from Ovid and from French epic.¹⁹ The protagonists are struck by Love's arrow. Leander swims to Hero every night, until one night Diana, goddess of virginity, angry at Hero's breaking of her vow of chastity, has Neptune brew a terrible storm, and Leander is killed. When Hero finds his body, she pleads for death to take her. The two lovers are finally buried in a tomb with an inscription marking their martyrdom to love. The strait that Leander swims across is Hellespont (now known as the Dardanelles), the narrow channel between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, which leads to Constantinople and the Black Sea, and thus links Europe and Asia. The passage has had great mythical and legendary significance since the ancient Greeks, and in the *Leandreide* it provides a point of relation between classical myth and fourteenth-century Venetian politics: the war with Genoa of 1378-81 was sparked by the Venetian occupation of the strategically-important island of Tenedos, which controlled the entrance to the Hellespont.

Interrupting his retelling of the myth, Nadal gives space to a section imitating the *Commedia* and the *Trionfi*. Love fetches up with his followers: Dante, performing for Giovanni the role played by Virgil in the *Commedia*, introduces a host of ancient and medieval poets. Greece is represented by Homer, Aristophanes, and Euripides, among others; Latin poets include Virgil, Cicero, and Juvenal. But the list favours recent generations and contemporaries of Nadal: there appears the peerless Petrarch, 'glorioso ancor tra i vivi' (IV.6.37) [still glorious amongst the living], before Dante introduces the poet to those who 'cantaro in lingua vulgar sola' (IV.7.9) [sing in their own vernacular]. These include, as in the *Trionfi*, the two Guidos and Cino da Pistoia, but also poets from towns across the Veneto, whose provenances are mentioned:

¹⁹ Ed. Lippi.

notably, the Trevisan Nicolò de' Rossi and the Paduan Antonio da Tempo. The most intriguing supplement to Petrarch's parade, however, is a large group of contemporary Venetian writers—in fact, 21 out of 64 poets named in total are Venetians—giving a hint of a Venetian lyric tradition that has left only a few traces.²⁰ Those identifiable include Giovanni Quirini, one of the earliest recorded Venetian vernacular lyric poets in Venice, whose corpus comprises over one hundred poems, dating to the fourteenth century and extant in Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Lat. XIV.223. Quirini was a great imitator of Dante, and his poetry assimilates Tuscan linguistic forms and *stilnuovo* motifs into the Venetian language, thus demonstrating both the quick spread of Florentine poetry to northern Italy, particularly to the Veneto, and the tendency to multilingualism in Venetian literature. By canonizing poets such as he, the *Leandreide* supplements Dante and Petrarch by adding Venetian poets to the pageant of literary talent, thereby contending that Venetian poetry can match the greats and making Venice the legitimate heir to classical, Tuscan, and Occitan traditions. Moreover, the text again evidences language-mixing in Venetian literary production, and probably represents the last piece of Occitan produced on the Italian peninsula (the best-known products being the *vidas* and *razos* already alluded to).²¹ Nadal composed a section where the troubadour Arnaut de Marueilh, speaking in Occitan, presents a gallery of *langue d'oc* poets:

Arnaüt de Meruoil ieu suy clamatz,
qu'en totes mas chanzon ses jauzimen

²⁰ For the identification of some of these figures, see Viscardi, 'Lingua'. Dornetti, *Aspetti*, introduces a number of the less well-known fourteenth-century poets of the Veneto.

²¹ Folena, 'Tradizione', pp. 136-7.

ri, chan e plor e sper desesperatz.
Dir mon voler non aus ne mon talen
vas Amors e m'amie, ne pe.l timors
non las ges qu'eu non dic mon pessamen.
En joy, en gaug, en ris tray ma dolors;
d'er en avan diray de ma compaynna,
qe say qe.l chier e vol t'arme e ton cors.

(IV.8.1-9)

[I am called Arnaut de Marueh; in all my songs I laugh without joy, sing and cry, and hope without hope. I do not dare to speak to Love or to my beloved of my wishes and my desire, but I do not allow fear to prevent me singing of my thoughts. In joy, gaiety, and laughter I play out my pain; from here on in I will sing of my company, for I know my love for it. It wants your soul and body.]

Many of the figures featuring in the *Trionfi* turn up again here. Once more, troubadours feature as first and foremost among miserable lovers. Nadal, unlike Petrarch, draws his knowledge of the poets' biographies directly from the poems themselves, rather than from *vidas* or *razos*. Petrarch and Nadal's parades signal, above all, the continuing interest in troubadours alongside Tuscan and classical influences. Troubadour manuscript production may be associated with other locations in the Veneto—*N* (New York, Pierpont Morgan 819) and *L* (Rome, Vatican Lat. 3208) were produced in the area around Mantua and Padua in the mid to late fourteenth century²²—but *D* (Modena, Biblioteca Estense Alpha R.4.4) belonged to the Venetian library of Zuan Malpiero Cataneus in the early fifteenth century (the final folio indicates this),²³ and two other *chansonniers* ended up there later: *A* (Rome, Vatican Lat. 5232) and *K* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 12473). The latter two, along with *I* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 854), are unique in transmitting the poems of the thirteenth-century Venetian troubadour Bertelmo

²² See Folena, 'Tradizione' on troubadour manuscripts produced in the Veneto.

²³ Folena, 'Tradizione', p. 9.

Zorzi. Like Nadal's work, they place a local product in amongst the greats. Such a move occurs in the compilation London, British Library, King's 321, 'scritto per mano de Andrea da Badagio in le prison de Venexia 1400' (f. 48r). Andrea's own poems follow those of Petrarch, in another Venetian continuation of the legacy of the master poet, himself so acutely aware of his place in a succession of writers.

These examples point to an overall tendency to collect and compile—rather than compose—at Venice. A manuscript dating to 1410 (Siena, Biblioteca Senese I.IX.18), written by the Venetian Giovanni Bonafé, again traces a panoramic view of poetic history, stretching from Dante and Cavalcanti to Trecento poets such as Fazio degli Uberti, Matteo Correggiaio, Boccaccio, and Antonio da Ferrara, and finally to Quattrocento Tuscan works and even new rhymes by Antonio degli Alberti, which, according to rubrics in the manuscript, were commissioned by Bonafé himself.²⁴

Dante's *oeuvre* was one of the main beneficiaries of Venetian copying activity: between 1392 and 1394, the Venetian Giacomo Gradenigo transcribed the *Commedia* and added miniatures, producing a magnificent manuscript (Rimini, Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga 4.I.II.25). Petrarch's works too were frequently reproduced: the Venetian humanist Leonardo Giustinian, who translated a number of Plutarch's works into Latin, copied Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Rediano 118), as well as imitating him in his own poems.²⁵ Just as Venice offered hospitality to foreign literary proficiency in the guise of Petrarch, so it provided a home for literary texts from elsewhere. And the medieval works conserved in Venetian manuscripts from this time prefigure Venice's proud status as

²⁴ Balduino, 'Le esperienze', p. 274.

²⁵ Folena, 'La cultura volgare', p. 391.

the busiest producer of printed books in Europe from the late fifteenth century onwards.

Chronicles

The *Dragmalogia* reveals the view that chronicles were the area in which city-states could make the greatest contribution. Literary production at Venice centred on chronicles, with the fourteenth century seeing a great flourish of historiography, much of it still unedited.²⁶ What marked the rise of the genre from obscurity to pre-eminence were the efforts of the doge and intellectual Andrea Dandolo, who may have taken inspiration from Martin da Canal's *Estoires de Venise*. As well as codifying the laws and statutes of Venice, and compiling state documents, Dandolo produced two chronicles: the relatively short *Cronica brevis* (1342) and the longer *Cronica per extensum descripta* (1352).²⁷ Positioned at the intersection between literature, philosophy and history, they integrate historical narrative into a wider ethical argument that justifies Venice's actions and importance through notions of freedom, justice, and providential function.²⁸ Two main aspects of Dandolo's vision display influences from East and West: an Aristotelian current of scholastic law, medicine, and science on the one hand, and on the other a more literary current of poetry and rhetoric, inspired by Petrarch, with wide-ranging conceptions of history.

²⁶ Arnaldi and Capo, 'I cronisti', survey the chronicle tradition.

²⁷ See Dandolo, *Cronica*, ed. Pastorello.

²⁸ See Gaeta, 'Storiografia'.

Art and architecture, patronized by Dandolo, cultivated Venice's dual heritage: the Roman tradition, mediated by Florence, interacted in Venetian style and iconography with influences from the 'other Rome', Constantinople.²⁹ This worked to justify Venetian power in the East and on the mainland, as well as emphasizing Venice's divine origins, legal foundations, and the continuity of its institutions. The *Cronica per extensum descripta* aims likewise to put history at the service of ideology: a carefully-managed account, it selects and knits together different strands. Venice has multiple origins: the chronicle begins with the evangelist Mark's preaching mission to the lagoon area—Mark founds his first church in Aquileia in 48 AD—but also speaks of the legendary settlement of the area by Trojan refugees under the command of the hero Antenor; of its foundation by Paduan consuls on the day of the Annunciation; and of the fifth-century flight of a community threatened by Attila the Hun's invasions to the islands of the lagoon. Narrated around these points are Nero's persecutions of Christians; the conversion of the Britons; Mark's martyrdom; and the devastations of the Roman Empire, with Venice all the while a calm spot surrounded by chaos. The city's geography, by giving her shelter from attack, defines her eternal task of fighting for civilization against the barbarians: over the centuries, Venice combats Hungarians, Lombards, Saracens, and Slavs, amongst others. The other consequence of Venice's location—her constant battle with the elements—features too, as instances of extreme weather are noted. The troubles of areas that will later be of interest to Venice, such as Constantinople and Cyprus, are recorded, thus highlighting the benefits of Venetian influence against a background of misery and misrule. From the tenth century onwards, focus shifts to Venice, now a major world

²⁹ See Brown, *Venice & Antiquity*, pp. 34-43; Pincus, 'The Two Romes'.

actor. Throughout, the doge embodies individuality and continuity. A unifying presence in the history of Venice, he is also a link to God, a 'transmission agent bringing divine revelation into the deliberations of state'.³⁰

Dandolo's account was continued, with recordings until 1388, by the chancellor Raffaino Caresini in his chronicle, which mentions Dandolo's own two works (p. 3).³¹ Its early sections quickly dispatch narrative of the reigns of a series of doges, before telling of Dandolo's rise to dogeship. The chronicle then comes to crises for Venice: uprest in Trieste and revolt in Crete. The main subject, however, is the war with Genoa; here, it rejoins the work of Daniele di Chinazzo, whose *Cronica de la Guerra da Veniciani a Zenovesi* covers the years 1376-84.³² Though it is in a different language (Franco-Italian) and style to Raffaino's work, both have the same concerns. Daniele's text opens by speaking of the Venetians' special relationship with Constantinople. This provokes Genoese jealousy: according to Daniele, the Genoese conspire to replace the Byzantine emperor John V by his son Andronicus, hoping thereby to obtain the island of Tenedos, in Venetian hands since 1377. Owing to its position at the gateway to the Hellespont, Tenedos controlled access to Constantinople and the Black Sea, which Daniele calls the 'Mer Maçor' (p. 18) [great sea]. Raffaino claims that the people of Tenedos had spontaneously ceded to Venice, 'volentesque inhumanum et asperrimum servitutis iugum Ianuensium evitare' (p. 32) [wishing to avoid the inhumane and rude yoke of Genoese servitude], and Daniele too paints the Genoese as cruel and unreasonable enemies. When war breaks out, the king

³⁰ Pincus, 'Hard Times', p. 115.

³¹ Ed. Pastorello.

³² Ed. Lazzarini.

of Hungary and Francesco da Carrara, ruler of Padua, join the Genoese side, along with the patriarch of Friuli. Venice and its subject town of Treviso are thus surrounded by enemies. Raffaino laments: ‘O Patava ingratitude, praesumis adversus ducalem praeminentiam calcaneum erigere! quae a te a tyrannide Eccelina et Scagliera bis noscitur liberasse!’ (p. 21) [Oh ungrateful Padua, which leads a rebellion against the most eminent doge, who should be credited with twice freeing you from tyranny, of Ezzelino and of the della Scalas!]. Another blast targets the king of Hungary, who ‘transmisit Hungarorum multitudinem, qui territoria tarvisina hostiliter invaserunt, commitentes homicidia, spolia, incendia atque praedas, non parcendo sexui, neque aetati’ (p. 23) [sent the hordes of Hungary, who invaded the Trevisan march in a hostile manner, committing murder, robbery, arson, and looting, with care neither for the gender or age of their victims].

Daniele recounts an initial series of victories for the heroic admiral Vettor Pisani. However, Pisani cannot yet return to Venice: he must settle, rather, at Pola for the winter. The demoralized Venetians are defeated there in May 1379—only six galleys escape—and on his return to Venice, Pisani is imprisoned. In August of the same year, the real low-point comes when the city of Chioggia, within the lagoon, falls to the Genoese. Despite the great danger to Venice, Daniele retains his faith: ‘ma Dio non volse che tanto e desgratia ne ochoresse, che una cità de tanta magnitudine et utile a gran parte del mondo fosse destruta chon tanta extremitade’ (p. 56) [God never wanted such a disgraceful thing to happen, as for such a great city, useful to much of the world, to be so cruelly destroyed]. Raffaino too believes that God is on Venice’s side: ‘amissio Clugiae, quae a claudendo portam Venetiarum dici potest, maximam ruinam secum traxisset, nisi divina providentia, cui ab ipso primordio Venetiarum civitas extitit commendata [...] mirabiliter affuisset’ (p. 37) [the loss of Chioggia,

which could be said to be the gate closing off Venice, could have brought great ruin, were it not for the miraculous aid of divine providence, to which Venice has been entrusted since its very beginnings].

Daniele's main interest throughout remains the people and their hero. The populace prevails on the doge to pardon Pisani, and eventually he cedes: Pisani walks free to cries of 'Viva miser Vettor, viva el nostro padre!' (p. 58) [long live Mister Vettor, long live our father!]. Morale rises, and Daniele recalls the famous defence of the city against Frederick Barbarossa. In the rest of Daniele's account, Pisani seems to take on the Genoese single-handedly, first building new fortifications, then leading the fleet against their enemy at sea: 'onde non fo may do Chomuni in ato de guera si preso l'un l'altro che fosse de tanta mortalitade e pericholo chome era quelli do' (p. 104) [never were two communes in such closely-fought war with so many fatalities and such destruction as were these two]. Chioggia is liberated, and the fight continues into the Adriatic before Pisani suffers a fatal wound in August 1380. Great ceremony and universal sorrow greet the arrival of his body in Venice, as 'el iera padre e speranza de tuto el puovolo de Veniexia' (p. 148) [he was the father and the hope of the entire people of Venice]. Caresini, on the other hand, uses narrative of the war to define the historical role of Venice in fighting barbarians. He sketches a world bigger than Venice, united by Christianity, in which Venice abhors the spilling of Christian blood ('effusionem sanguinis christiani', p. 28). Neither chronicle, then, can be considered a bald enumeration of the facts. Both display the literary values of the genre; both use history to ideological ends; and both argue strongly for Venice's status as a chosen city, protected by God. Venice, halfway between Avignon and Constantinople, thus becomes the new Rome.

Venice's principal contribution to literary history came through the possibilities for dissemination offered by her control of islands, trading outposts, and strongholds across the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea, her commerce with England and Flanders, and her role as a major embarkation point for Alexandria and Jaffa. To focus first on *chansons de geste*, the genre now most prominent in the Biblioteca Marciana's Franco-Italian manuscript collection: many manuscripts of Franco-Italian epics now in the library originated in other cities in the Veneto:³³ the 'Venice 4' codex of the *Chanson de Roland* goes back to early fourteenth-century Treviso (Marciana Fr. 4 = 225); the cyclical Carolingian codex known as the *Geste Francor* (Marciana Fr. 13 = 256) was probably made near the same town in the fourteenth century;³⁴ and *L'Entrée d'Espagne* (Marciana Fr. 21 = 257), an original Franco-Italian song recounting the early stages of Charlemagne's conquest of Spain and Roland's exile to the East, dates from Padua around 1330.³⁵ Texts like these belonged to noble families such as the Gonzagas of Mantua, and were donated to Venice only later, particularly in the eighteenth century. But the importance of Venice in disseminating epic texts can be exemplified through the manuscript history of *Buovo d'Antona*. One of the most widespread and frequently translated *chansons de geste*, *Buovo* can be

³³ See Holtus and Wunderli's survey of the Franco-Italian epic (*Les Épopées romanes*).

³⁴ For a reading of the *Geste*'s language and politics, see Sunderland, 'Linguistic and Political Ferment'.

³⁵ See Sunderland, 'Multilingualism', on language in *L'Entrée*.

found in Anglo-Norman, Welsh, Middle English (*Bevis of Hamtoun*), and French versions, as well as existing in Italian texts in a number of vernacular tongues, including Franco-Italian, Tuscan, and Emilian. One incarnation—Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pal. XC.III—came into being at Venice in the late fourteenth or earlier fifteenth century. Its hybrid language combines Veneto dialect with occasional intrusions from French forms.³⁶ Lacunary and fragmentary, this version recounts the hero's long period of exile in Little Armenia and his efforts to recover his lands after the death of his father at the hands of the treacherous Dodo, who conspires with his mother. Much of the tale takes place in the East, and the tradition perhaps spread there thanks to Venetian trading activity in Dalmatia and the eastern Mediterranean, the Italian versions of this text being the source for Yiddish and Slavic retellings.³⁷ Another testament within the epic tradition to the links between trade and the spread of literature is Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana 1025, a Guillaume d'Orange cyclical codex, perhaps made in Acre.³⁸ It belonged to Giovanni Soranzo, doge 1312-28, who either commissioned it or received it as gift from a Venetian trader. Soranzo sent the manuscript to the abbess of Santa Clara in Ragusa, a town subject to Venice.³⁹ Apparently, then, the doge saw *chansons de geste* as edifying reading material for nuns in a convent in a Venetian dependency.

³⁶ 'Bovo d'Antona', ed. Rajna, p. 127.

³⁷ See *La Geste*, ed. Morgan, pp. 104-5, and *Buovo d'Antona*, ed. Branca, p. 19.

³⁸ The recastings of Guillaume material in different codices are studied by Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles*.

³⁹ Busby, *Codex*, pp. 786-7; and see ch. 74 above on Ragusa (Dubrovnik) above.

As with epic, so the production of large numbers of Arthurian manuscripts on the Italian peninsula is associated with areas in northern Italy other than Venice, notably *scriptoria* in the regions of Pisa and Genoa.⁴⁰ From there, codices made their way into seigniorial libraries: of the Gonzaga, again, or of the Este of Ferrara. However, Venetian influence in spreading legend is once more evident. The account of an Italian pilgrim returning from Jerusalem in 1395 reveals that the tale of Gauvain's rescue of Morgan le Fay's daughter and subsequent marriage to her was known in the Venetian colonial garrison in Negroponte—modern Chalkida in Euboea—where it had become attached to a local landmark.⁴¹ The most fascinating piece of testament to the use of literary texts at sea is the *Zibaldone da Canal*, a late fourteenth century Venetian mercantile codex containing useful information for a trading ship's captain: stars, medical treatments, and mathematical problems deriving from Arabic mathematical works but reconfigured to apply to Venetian trade, as well as data on prices, weights, and measures in various locations—principally Venetian outposts including Ancona, Armenia, Cyprus, Constantinople, and Negroponte—set in comparison to those prevailing in Venice.⁴² It also includes a Venetian chronicle enumerating the principle events in the city's history from its foundation to 1257 and focussing in particular on wars in the Mediterranean; a set of love poems; a series of prayers; and a fragment from a Tristan romance, telling of Tristan's mother's death in childbirth and his stepmother's attempt to poison the young Tristan. This last is a

⁴⁰ A comprehensive survey of Italian Arthurian manuscript production is given by Branca, *Tristano*.

⁴¹ Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 143.

⁴² Ed. Stussi.

greatly reduced version of an episode found in the Italian Tristan texts. The most popular hero in Italy, Tristan first became known there through the widely-disseminated French prose texts, where he becomes an Arthurian knight. Italian versions reshaped these narratives to accentuate the focus on Tristan.⁴³ From Italy, the legend spread to Slavic countries.⁴⁴ The *Zibaldone* provides a sense of how this might have happened, and underscores once more the importance of considering economic and social history alongside the dissemination of literary texts. Trade, including the slave trade that aroused Petrarch's disgust, was central to Venice's place in literary history; traffic in people and goods proved inseparable from traffic in text and codex.

⁴³ See the readings of *Prose Tristan* manuscripts offered by Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles*.

⁴⁴ See *Tristano e Isotta*.

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